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BATTAGLIA DUBS STEPHEN FOSTER AS ‘ONE OF THE MOST COMPETITIVE EDITIONS IN RECENT YEARS’

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, June 14, 2019) – Churchill Downs veteran morning line odds maker **Mike Battaglia** has dubbed Saturday night’s \$600,000 Stephen Foster Presented by GE Appliances (Grade II) as “one of the most competitive editions in recent years.”

“In recent years for the Stephen Foster, we’ve always had a pretty solid favorite,” Battaglia said. “This year’s race is one of the most competitive editions in recent years. Every time I make the morning line, I will handicap the race on how I think bettors will play the horses. **Gift Box** and **Yoshida** are two horses in this race that I think bettors will lean on. Then you have horses like **Seeking the Soul** and **Tom’s d’Etat** that I think will get some action as well. It’s a really fun race.”

Gift Box, who Battaglia slated as the 3-1 morning line favorite, won the \$600,000 Santa Anita Handicap by a nose over **McKinzie** on April 6. Since Sadler began training Gift Box, he’s reeled off a half-length score in the \$300,000 San Antonio (GII) on Dec. 26 and, most recently, finished second to **Vino Rosso** in the \$500,000 Gold Cup at Santa Anita (GI) on May 27.

Battaglia made two-time Grade I-winner Yoshida (JPN) the 7-2 second-choice on the morning line and tabbed 2017 Clark Handicap (GI) hero Seeking the Soul at 4-1 and Alysheba (GII) runner-up Tom’s d’Etat at 5-1.

“After I make the morning line, I’ll go back over each race again to make my handicapping selections,” Battaglia said. “I think Seeking the Soul absolutely loves this track at Churchill and I thought he ran a very solid race in the Pegasus World Cup against **City of Light**. If he runs back to that effort, he can win this race.”

Battaglia will join Churchill Downs Racetrack’s **Darren Rogers** and **Kevin Kerstein** at 6:05 p.m. Friday on “**Inside Churchill Downs**” – the one-hour radio program on ESPN 680/105.7 – to discuss Saturday night’s card. Those outside the Louisville area can listen at www.espnloouisville.com.

The 1 1/8-mile Stephen Foster is the richest of six graded stakes races on Saturday’s special 11-race night racing card that begins at 6 p.m. (all times Eastern). Total purses on the evening are more than \$1.8 million, which makes it the most lucrative racing day for horsemen at Churchill Downs outside of the Kentucky Derby and Kentucky Oaks programs.

The Stephen Foster will go as Race 8 at 9:47 p.m. **NBCSN** will televise the race from 8:30-10 p.m. as part of its 2019 “**Breeders’ Cup Challenge Series: Win and You’re In presented by America’s Best Racing**” television schedule. Also, **Horse Racing Radio Network** (HRRN) will air live coverage on **SiriusXM 156** from 8-10 p.m. and **TVG** will provide live on-site updates throughout the evening.

The complete field for the Stephen Foster (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Thirstforlife** (Miguel Mena, Wes Hawley, 15-1); **Rated R Superstar** (Rodney Prescott, Cipriano Contreras, 20-1); **Runaway Ghost** (Julien Leparoux, Joe Peacock, 20-1); Seeking the Soul (John Velazquez, Dallas Stewart, 4-1); **Alkhaatam** (Channing Hill, Danny Peitz, 30-1); Gift Box (Joel Rosario, John Sadler, 3-1); **Tenfold** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Steve Asmussen, 12-1); **King Zachary** (Javier Castellano, Graham Motion, 12-1); Tom’s d’Etat (Shaun Bridgmohan, Al Stall Jr., 5-1); **Quip** (Florent Geroux, Rodolphe Brisset, 10-1); **Exulting** (Tyler Gaffalione, Mike Maker, 20-1); and Yoshida (JPN) (Jose Ortiz, Bill Mott, 7-2).

In Saturday’s 44th running of the \$250,000 Fleur de Lis Presented by Budweiser (GII), Battaglia made multiple Grade I-winning mare **Elate** the 8-5 morning line favorite and “the horse to beat.”

“(Elate) is definitely going to be the horse to beat in the Fleur de Lis,” Battaglia said. “She’s been so impressive in her career and I think class will prevail. But, you never know with Asmussen (**She’s a Julie**). She just won the La Troienne (GI) and could be sneaky.”

The 1 1/8-mile Fleur de Lis – which means “Flower of the Lily” and honors the French symbol that is incorporated into the city of Louisville’s flag – will be run as Race 7 at 9:12 p.m. (all times Eastern).

The Fleur de Lis field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Skeptic** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Rusty Arnold, 10-1); She’s a Julie (Ricardo Santana Jr., Asmussen, 2-1); Elate (Jose Ortiz, Bill Mott, 8-5); **Go Google Yourself** (Gabriel Saez, Paul McGee, 12-1); **Blue Prize (ARG)** (Javier Castellano, Ignacio Correas IV, 2-1); and **Auspicious Babe** (Florent Geroux, Dallas Stewart, 15-1).

Other stakes events on the night are the \$250,000 Wise Dan (GII) for 3-year-olds and up at 1 1/16 miles on turf with an over-subscribed field of 15 horses including seven-time Grade II winner **Itsinthepost (FR)**; the \$150,000 Matt Winn (GIII) for 3-year-olds at 1 1/16 miles featuring Pat Day Mile (GIII) hero **Mr. Money**; a well-matched cast of 11 3-year-old fillies in the \$150,000 Regret (GIII) at 1 1/8 miles on grass; and the \$100,000 President of the UAE Cup Sponsored by the UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs (GI) for Arabian 4-year-olds and up at 1 1/16 miles.

ITSINTHEPOST SET FOR FIRST START IN 10 MONTHS IN WISE DAN – **Red Baron's Barn's** multiple Grade II-winner **Itsinthepost (FR)** is ready to return to the races from a nearly 10-month layoff as the 5-1 co-morning line favorite in Saturday's \$250,000 Wise Dan (GII) at Churchill Downs.

Trained by **Jeff Mullins**, the 7-year-old gelded son of American Post (GB) won the 2018 San Marcos (GII), San Luis Rey (GII) and Charles Whittingham (GII) at Santa Anita. Overall, he's won seven Grade II events. Itsinthepost has been based at Churchill Downs since early May with Mullins' son, and assistant trainer, **Jeff Mullins Jr.**

"If he can run to the way he's been training, we think he can be ready in his first start off the layoff," Mullins Jr. said. "The one thing that we're not too sure of is how he will like this distance. It's probably not his best distance and will want to go longer later in the year but it is a good spot for him to start back. I do think he loves this surface at Churchill."

Jeff Mullins, who has a small string of horses based at Churchill Downs, arrived in Kentucky on Thursday evening. Former Southern California-based rider **Tyler Baze** has the return call on Itsinthepost in the Wise Dan.

Chief among Itsinthepost's rivals in the Wise Dan is co-favorite **Admission Office** for trainer **Brian Lynch**. Admission Office, who was previously conditioned by **Chad Brown**, closed from nine lengths off the early pace in the Dixie to finish a half-length behind multiple graded stakes winner **Catholic Boy**. **Joel Rosario** has the call.

The Wise Dan field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Get Western** (Julien Leparoux, Charlie LoPresti, 50-1); **All Right** (Adam Beschizza, John Ortiz, 30-1); **First Premio** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Mark Casse, 8-1); **Hot Springs** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Steve Asmussen, 10-1); **Holiday Stone** (Florent Geroux, Eddie Kenneally, 20-1); **Siem Riep** (James Graham, Ben Colebrook, 8-1); Itsinthepost (Baze, Mullins, 5-1); **Noble Commander** (Gabriel Saez, Phil D'Amato, 30-1); **Inspector Lynley** (Jose Ortiz, Shug McGaughey, 6-1); **El Picaro (CHI)** (Javier Castellano, Ignacio Correias IV, 12-1); **March to the Arch** (Tyler Gaffalione, Casse, 6-1); Admission Office (Rosario, Lynch, 5-1); **Cullum Road** (John Velazquez, Mike Maker, 6-1); and **Bourbon Resolution** (Chris Landeros, Ian Wilkes, 10-1). Also Eligible: **Parlor** (Corey Lanerie, Eddie Kenneally, 10-1).

The Wise Dan will go as Race 6 at 8:37 p.m.

Noble Commander, Cullum Road and Bourbon Resolution were re-entered Friday in an allowance/optional claiming race at 1 1/8 miles on turf that will go as Thursday night's eighth race at 7:54 p.m.

The race formerly known as the Firecracker was renamed in 2016 to honor **Mort Fink's** two-time Horse of the Year who completed a spectacular racing career with a perfect four-race season in 2014. The **Charlie LoPresti**-trained gelding by Wiseman's Ferry compiled a remarkable lifetime record of 23-2-0 in 31 races with earnings of \$7,552,920 from 2010-14.

DRURY HOPING TO UPSET MATT WINN FIELD WITH ARMISTICE DAY – Typically trainer **Tommy Drury** is seen at the Receiving Barn shipping in horses from his main base at the Skylight Training Center, located about 20 minutes from Churchill Downs in Goshen, Ky. However, for the first time this spring, Drury stabled four horses at Churchill Downs and among them is **Bruce Lunsford** and **Lansdon Robbins' Armistice Day**, who will switch from the turf to dirt in Saturday's \$150,000 Matt Winn (Grade III).

"We thought we could give him a shot to prove if he likes the dirt against straight 3-year-olds," Drury said. "I know it's a pretty strong field and we really haven't proven ourselves yet. We are hoping that we can do it Saturday."

"(Armistice Day) has been training here at Churchill all spring and really does well over this surface. He's big horse with a long stride."

The Matt Winn, which goes as Race 5 Saturday with a post time of approximately 8:03 p.m. (all times Eastern), was named in honor of the famed Churchill Downs president that served as the driving force in the development of the Downs and his beloved Kentucky Derby.

Armistice Day, who is the longest shot in the field of seven horses at 20-1 on the morning line, ran at Woodbine as a 2-year-old for trainer **Barbara Minshall**. The gelded-son of Declaration of War returned as a 3-year-old March and was transferred to Drury's care. Armistice Day finished fourth in the Animal Kingdom Stakes at Turfway and sixth in a first-level allowance on the turf at Churchill Downs on Thurby.

"He's very aggressive and feels good galloping in the mornings," Drury's Churchill-based assistant and exercise rider **Zeke Castro** said. "He gives me a good workout every morning when we gallop. He's done awesome working over the dirt and the way he feels underneath me makes me think he'll like running on the dirt."

The field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Limonite** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Steve Asmussen, 7-2); **Signalman** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 4-1); **Nolo Contesto** (Joel Rosario, John Sadler, 3-1); **Knicks Go** (Tyler Gaffalione, Ben Colebrook, 5-1); **Proverb** (Calvin Borel, Ron Moquett, 15-1); Mr. Money (Saez, Calhoun, 2-1); and **Armistice Day** (Corey Lanerie, Drury, 20-1).

CHOATE BRIDGE HOPES TO OUTDO HALF-SISTER PROCTOR'S LEDGE IN SATURDAY'S REGRET – Two years ago, multiple graded stakes-winning mare **Proctor's Ledge** tested the Regret Stakes (Grade III) but finished second behind **Sweeping Paddy**. On Saturday, her 3-year-old half-sister **Choate Bridge** will attempt to avenge her defeat in the 1 1/8-mile turf event for 3-year-old fillies.

"If Choate Bridge can run to anything like her half-sister, she can be right there with them in the Regret," trainer **Brendan Walsh's** assistant **Tom Molloy** said. "I think she likes the 1 1/8-mile distance and she sort of showed that last time broke her maiden."

Owned and bred by **Patricia Moseley**, Choate Bridge took four starts to break her maiden. The Regret will be Choate Bridge's first start against winners. Tabbed at 10-1 on the morning line, Choate Bridge will be ridden by **Jose Ortiz**.

The Regret field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Winter Sunset** (Channing Hill, Wayne Catalano, 7-2); **Delta's Kingdom** (John Velazquez, Bill Mott, 8-1); **Crafty's Dream** (Sonny Leon, Michael Evans II, 50-1); **Varenka** (Javier Castellano, Graham Motion, 4-1); **Hard Legacy** (Julien Leparoux, Norm Casse, 8-1); **Hungry Kitten** (Joel Rosario, Shug McGaughey, 12-1); **Belle Laura** (Tyler Gaffalione, Norm Casse, 8-1); Choate Bridge (Ortiz, Walsh, 10-1); **Fortuante Girl** (Florent Geroux, Mark Casse, 12-1); **Gamblin Train** (Adam Beschizza, Buff Bradley, 10-1); and **Princessa Carolina** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 4-1). All fillies will carry 118 pounds.

The Regret is carded as Race 9 with a post time of 10:19 p.m.

DOWNS AFTER DARK THEME IS 'THE BIG EASY' – One of Louisville's biggest summer parties returns in earnest to Churchill Downs on Saturday as the home of the Kentucky Derby welcomes back its wildly-popular **"Downs After Dark Presented by Budweiser"** nighttime racing program for Stephen Foster night.

Churchill Downs will bring Bourbon Street to Louisville with the evening's theme of **"The Big Easy."** Guests are encouraged to wear New Orleans-inspired purple, green or gold.

The Dirty Dozen Brass Band will be the crown jewel of this year's Spring Meet entertainment when they headline Saturday's Downs After Dark with a performance on the Plaza Stage from 8:30-11:30 p.m. The New Orleans-based Dirty Dozen Brass Band is a world famous music machine whose name is synonymous with genre-bending romps and high-octane performances. The band has taken the traditional foundation of brass band music and incorporated it into a blend of genres including Bebop Jazz, Funk, R&B and Soul to create a unique sound they describe as a "musical gumbo."

Entertainment will also include a high-swinging, hard-blowing vintage jazz and pop performance by local four-beat band the **West Market Stompers** (6-8 p.m.), a Second Line Parade and Bourbon Street-themed cocktails and street performers.

General admission to Churchill Downs is \$12 on Saturday with a first post of 6 p.m. and gates at 5 p.m. Box seats are \$27 and reserved dining packages are \$69. All ticket options can be purchased online at www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets.

CHURCHILL DOWNS CHALLENGE HANDICAPPING CONTEST ON STEPHEN FOSTER NIGHT – Some of the nation's elite horseplayers will descend upon Churchill Downs on Saturday night and attempt to secure seats at the 2019 Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge as they pit their handicapping skills against the best Louisville has to offer.

The Churchill Downs Challenge Handicapping Contest is a "real money" handicapping tournament with a \$1,500 buy-in, of which \$1,000 will be used by participants to wager on Saturday night's Stephen Foster card with the other \$500 going toward the entry fee and prize pool. Wager types permitted are Win, Place, Show, Exacta, Trifecta and Daily Double only.

The top two finishers in the tournament will receive \$10,000 Breeders' Cup Betting Challenge seats for the Nov. 1-2 event plus a \$1,000 travel voucher. The third-place finisher will receive a \$2,500 voucher.

Saturday's prize pool is based on 50 entries. All entry fees will be paid back to prize pool should more than 50 entries participate. Horseplayers can register by emailing **Gary Palmisano** at Gary.Palmisano@KyDerby.com.

ALL-STAKES PICK 5 TO BE OFFERED SATURDAY NIGHT – Churchill Downs will make it a special night for bettors at Saturday's "Downs After Dark" as the track offers an all-stakes Pick 5 as part of its special wagering menu.

The all-stakes Pick 5 on Races 5-9 starting at 7:57 p.m., which encompasses the Matt Winn (Race 5), Wise Dan (Race 6), Fleur de Lis (Race 7), Stephen Foster (Race 8) and Regret (Race 9). There also will be an all-stakes Pick 4 on Races 6-9 starting at 8:30 p.m.

All told, there will be three Pick 5s (Races 1-5, Races 5-9 and Races 7-11) and three Pick 4s (Races 2-5, Races 6-9 and Races 8-11) on the night. Both the Pick 4 and Pick 5 are 50-cent minimum bets.

The 20-cent minimum Single 6 Jackpot will cover Races 4-9 and the \$1 Super Hi 5 will be staged on the final race of the night.

DOWN THE STRETCH – There was a \$151,859 carryover in the Single 6 jackpot for Friday's nine-race program. ... Hall of Fame trainer **Steve Asmussen** began Thursday's card needing four wins to become only the third trainer in Churchill Downs history to have 700 victories beneath the Twin Spires. ... Jockey **Brian Hernandez Jr.** was six wins away from 600 victories at Churchill Downs. ... Churchill Downs is offering a special Father's Day combo ticket offer for Sunday's 10-race program. The Father's Day combo includes a reserved box seat, official program, domestic beer or souvenir soda, and a hot dog for only \$15. Visit <https://www1.ticketmaster.com/event/16005572E3D31EA3?did=fathersday> and select Father's Day combo as a ticket type to purchase on Ticketmaster.com. Also available is the Stakes & Eggs Brunch in the Stakes Room for \$57.

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